

The Merci Train

The Friendship Carries On

A FrancoFête Celebration



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Mission Statement

Louisiana Old State Capitol
Center for Political and Governmental History
provides a learning experience on the history of our state and the democratic process.
This historic site and diverse facility advances the visitor's knowledge of our rich cultural
heritage and vibrant political tradition.

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September 5, 1999



Dear Educator:

Welcome to the 1999 educational fall program **The Merci Train...The Friendship Carries On**. Many of you have participated in our programs in the past and for those of you who have not, I am glad to have you join us this year.

As in our previous projects, you will find this curriculum full of information regarding the historical significance of the Merci Train boxcar and the importance of student involvement in the National WWII Memorial in Washington.

In speaking with the Old State Capitol staff, I was sharing many stories that related to Louisiana veterans. Veterans that we need to continue to remember and the price they paid for ensuring our democracy. The best way for this generation of students to say thank you to what is now called "The Greatest Generation" is for them to learn as much as they can about democracy, support and friendship between nations and then to actively participate in the National WWII Memorial portion of this project.

Currently, our state is 1 of 11 who have not yet committed funding for Louisiana's participation in this memorial. It is required that each state provide \$1 for every WWII veteran who served from their state, bringing the Louisiana total to \$278,000. As stated before, this is a wonderful opportunity for our students to realize and appreciate what our veterans gave to guarantee our freedom. As a way of appropriately thanking our WWII veterans, we are asking each student to contribute individually or to organize fundraising drives so that our Louisiana veterans can be included in this national memorial.

All of the details for this project can be found in the curriculum and please don't hesitate to let us know if you have any questions or need any assistance. A toll free number has been installed for your use, 1-800-488-2968.

I again thank you for joining Louisiana's Old State Capitol for supporting these projects in the "Year of the Veteran".

Sincerely,



W. Fox McKeithen

The Merci Train...*The Friendship Carries On*

A FrancoFête Celebration

Project Synopsis

This year we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Merci Train boxcars arriving in America. As you will read later, the boxcars came as a gift from France for America's support both during and after World War II. Every state received a boxcar filled with gifts of gratitude - some gifts were very extravagant such as a jeweled Legion of Honor pin belonging to Napoleon, lace, vases, etc. and some were very thoughtful colored pictures from children, a handprint of a woman who had nothing else to give, a pair of worn shoes, etc. To commemorate this celebration we are asking our students to create cultural type gifts which display our cultural diversity or gifts that might reflect the French influence in their school, community or parish. We will recreate this act of generosity by collecting these gifts at the Old State Capitol, displaying them through May, 2000, and then transporting them to students in France.

This lesson plan will:

- provide curriculum to help you teach the historical significance of the exchange of friendship
- provide suggested activities to partner with your teaching
- suggest gift ideas to be made by Louisiana students
- provide benchmarks from the Louisiana Department of Education and their relation to sample questions and activities

National WWII Memorial

Project Synopsis

During World War II, 278,000 Louisianians served in uniform and many lost their lives. The National World War II Memorial will be the first national memorial dedicated to all who served during the war. The memorial will honor all military veterans of the war, the citizens on the home front, the nation at large, and the high moral purpose and idealism that motivated the nation's call to arms. It will also be a timeless salute to our veterans who helped secure victory and enabled future generations to receive the most precious gift of all--freedom.

The memorial will be located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. at the Rainbow Pool site at the east end of the Reflecting pool between the Lincoln Monument and Washington Monument. This prominent location is commensurate with the historical importance and lasting significance of WWII to America and the world.

What can you and your students do:

- study the issues of World War II
- study certain events which happened during WWII and are still controversial today i.e. U.S.S. Indianapolis (this research will also uncover how one 14 year old student is making a dramatic difference in Congress for the reversal of a court marshal)
- interview and speak with people who had first-hand experience with the war
- donate, either individually or through a class/school fundraiser, to the National WWII Memorial (all donations should be made payable to the Old State Capitol Foundation/WWII Memorial)

There are currently over 900,000 students in Louisiana schools. Won't you please join the others in having Louisiana students thank what is now called "The Greatest Generation", our WWII veterans, by financially supporting this project. Each participating school will be recognized on a plaque which will become part of the Old State Capitol's Veterans Exhibit.

The Merci Train...*The Friendship Carries On*

Louisiana's Old State Capitol Fall '99 Educational Project

A FrancoFête Celebration

Teachers statewide are invited to participate in this educational program which teaches the background of this historical boxcar located on the grounds of the Old State Capitol. The Merci Train boxcar is currently undergoing renovation and will be restored to its original grandeur. At the conclusion of this program students will understand the importance of gratitude between two nations and the important role our WWII veterans played in the freedom that both we as Americans and the citizens of France enjoy today. The program includes:

Teacher curriculum for every teacher who registers - our goal is to reach 500,000 students

Students designing and making cultural gifts and projects which show the French influence in their communities, etc. which will be sent to students in France (location to be determined by the Department of State and the Lieutenant Governor's Office)

Financial support by the students of Louisiana for the National WWII Memorial in Washington D.C.

(Louisiana is one of 11 states currently not participating in this national effort. Participation includes the state providing \$1 for every WWII veteran who served from Louisiana. The total to be collected for our state is \$278,000.00. The Old State Capitol and Office of Veteran's Affairs are partnering this program with the Merci Train project and are committing the students of our state to solely sponsor Louisiana's participation in the National WWII Memorial. ***What an appropriate and wonderful way for our Louisiana students to thank our WWII veterans*** for ensuring our freedom as Americans.)

A Grand Finale event tentatively scheduled for November 18, 1999 whereas the celebration will begin with a military parade and will include a ceremony on the grounds of the Old State Capitol. Student representatives will present their cultural project that will be shared with students in France and present the funds for the National WWII Memorial.

Senator Bob Dole serves as Chairman of the National WWII Memorial and **Tom Hanks** serves as the national spokesperson. We are making every effort to have them attend the grand finale event so that they can publicly thank the students of our state for the tremendous support they have given these projects.



Deadlines and Dates to Remember

- ✓ **October 26** **gift description due**
please see attached form
- ✓ **November 5** **boxcar designs due**
please send in boxcar designs and accompanying registration form
for judging
- ✓ **November 10** **donations for WWII Memorial due**
please make checks payable to:
Old State Capitol Foundation/WWII Memorial
all schools donating money for the WWII Memorial will be
recognized on a plaque in Louisiana Old State Capitol's Veterans
Exhibit
- ✓ **November 18** **registration for parade participants due**
please see attached registration form
- ✓ **November 18** **Grand Finale / Military Parade - Tentative Date**

Please call Louisiana's Old State Capitol if you have any questions or concerns. Our toll free number is 800-488-2968.

Background Information

After WWII came to a close, the country of France began the solemn task of rebuilding a nation ravaged by war. Years of German occupation had inflicted many scars upon the French people. They were in great need of life's everyday necessities. In his daily column, the "Merry-go-round," noted Washington newspaperman Drew Pearson, suggested that America come to the aid of its European friend. Inspired by Pearson's idea of a Friendship Train, newspapers all across the country joined in the effort and over forty million dollars worth of supplies were collected to send to France. Seven hundred boxcars of food, fuel, medicine, and clothing left on a ship from New York City and arrived in France on December 18, 1947.

A little over a year after the Friendship Train arrived in France, the French people expressed their gratitude with a train of their own, the Merci Train. Loaded with gifts of thanks, the forty-nine boxcars arrived in the United States on February 2, 1949. One boxcar was distributed to each of the forty-eight states leaving the territory of Hawaii and the District of Columbia to share the forty-ninth car.

Louisiana's Merci Train is located on the grounds of Louisiana's Old State Capitol. It is scheduled for renovation in the next year, returning it to its original condition. It remains a powerful symbol of the friendship between two great nations as well as a reminder of the generosity of a generation.

We are proud to celebrate the Merci Train's fiftieth anniversary. It affords us a wonderful opportunity to share with our youngest citizens the significance of living in a global community and the actions of the past which make that possible.

Please read more about Merci Train in the accompanying article, "*What Ever Happened to Those Forty and Eights?*" reprinted by permission of **The Retired Officer**, Joann Hodges, Editor.

Goals and Objectives

It is our goal that every student participating in this program will learn more about the great country they live in by learning about the Friendship and Merci Trains. We hope that each class participating in this program will make a gift contribution to the 1999 Merci Train project.

Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, the learner will be able to:

- Locate Louisiana's Merci Train boxcar
- Locate France on a globe and make some comparisons between the U.S. and France
- Describe the purpose of the Friendship Train and the Merci Train
- Understand French influences on Louisiana's culture
- Discuss the significance of these events

By participating in creating a gift for the 1999 Merci Train the learner will:

- Be able to work cooperatively in groups
- Be able to express his or her uniqueness in the world
- Understand the importance of cultural exchange and tolerance

Internet Ideas

Check out Louisiana's Old State Capitol's web site for the following:

The web site is www.sec.state.la.us/osc-1.htm

- An overview of the Merci Train project
- WWII links
- Curriculum guide
- Student participation updates

Suggested Activities

Included here are several activities which will enhance the Merci Train story. Please choose those activities best suited to the ages and abilities of your students.

- Read the background information to your students and distribute the worksheets appropriate for your class. Discuss their answers as a class.
- Have each student color the flags of the United States and France. Discuss the similarities and the differences.
- Using a globe, discover more about the physical relationship between the U.S. and France. Find out what the time difference is between the two countries and discuss what the children in France might be doing at the time you are doing this activity. Compare physical features.
- Assign each child a short country report on how the U.S. and France are alike and how they are different.
- Ask students to research war veterans in their community. How many veterans are living in your community? Are any of your family members war veterans? Interview these men and women about their experiences.
- Invite a war veteran to your classroom to share his or her experiences.
- Collect letters written from veterans to loved ones during WWII. Display them in your school's library.
- Ask students to research their own heritage to discover if they have any family ties to France. Send them home with a simple family tree and have them interview their parents about the origins of their family name and family members.
- Contact Louisiana's Old State Capitol for information about getting French pen pals for your class.
- Assign your students the task of finding out more about WWII in France. Focus on particular battles, particular areas of France, American soldiers in France, France at the end of the war, or the rebuilding of France after WWII.
- Read newspapers for examples of friendship and diplomacy between the United States and other countries today. Discuss the ways the United States helps other countries. Are there examples of friendship, like the Merci Train, today?
- Have students research the role of women in WWII.
- Participate in the 1999 Merci Train project.
- Check out Louisiana's Old State Capitol web site for information on WWII and the Merci Train.
- Come to Louisiana's Old State Capitol and see Louisiana's boxcar. Explore the exhibits, which document our state's colorful political past.

Suggested Merci Train Gifts

The 1999 Merci Train project is designed to give your students an opportunity to work together to create a unique expression of who they are and to share this gift with the students of France. Encourage them to reflect on their own lives and to thoughtfully decide what they want to say to the French students. This is a wonderful way to celebrate being a citizen of a great state. While you are working on your gifts, talk to your students about what makes them, your community, and America so special.

Students may create gifts individually or your class may participate as a whole. Below are some ideas for gifts but please do not feel limited by this list. You may want to get teachers of other disciplines involved, such as an art teacher, English teacher, French teacher, or journalism teacher.

- Video a message from your class to schoolchildren in France. Include interesting information about what you are studying, what your children like to do in and out of school, what they hope for in the future, and other well wishes for the children who will be viewing the tape.
- Have the children create colorings or paintings of their life in Louisiana for an art show in a classroom in France. Suggest they depict their family, their houses, their community, or other unique aspects of our state.
- Make a class scrapbook with photos, artwork, and classwork. Make two and keep one for your class!
- Make magnets with pictures of your students.
- Collect flower seeds and instructions for planting a friendship garden.
- Create a class flag.
- Decorate T-shirts.
- Gather artifacts from your community such as postcards or souvenirs unique to your area.
- Collect Mardi Gras beads and have your students write short essays on how they celebrate the holiday.
- Make a classroom banner.
- Sew a quilt. Contact a local quilting guild and see if they will assist your students in creating a one-of-a-kind gift. Students can each make a square and the guild can help put them together. Students could each bring a scrap of cloth from home from something that has significance to them. Be sure to include the “story” of our quilt.
- Make bookmarks.
- Collect used books that our students particularly enjoy. Books by Louisiana authors or about our state would be wonderful.
- Write a book about your class, your school, and your community. Have your students illustrate it with colorful pictures.
- Make a photograph album. Have your students document their community through photographs.
- Write a class newspaper.
- Write a short play and videotape it. Perhaps the play could be about our state, friendship, or the approaching millennium.

Our Merci Train Gift Description

Class / Student name _____

Age of student(s) _____ Grade/Subject _____

Teacher _____

School _____

School address _____

School phone number _____



Gift Description.

Please provide a brief description of your gift, including its size.

Additional Activities and Benchmarks

You will find additional discussion questions and activities below. Also listed are benchmarks from the Louisiana Department of Education's Content Standards that correspond to each activity.

K-4 Discussion Questions

Example	Strands and Benchmarks
Where is France in relation to the United States?	Geography G-1A-E2 locating and interpreting geographic features and places on maps and globes
How and why did the Americans help French citizens survive after WWII?	History. H-1A-E2 recognizing that people in different times and places view the world differently
Do you know any French people in your community? Do you have any people in your family who are veterans?	History. H-1A-E3 identifying and using primary and secondary historical sources to learn about the past
Memorial Day and Veterans' Day honor those who fought for our country. How does your city or community honor these people?	Civics. C-1D-E4 describing the many ways that citizens can participate in and contribute to their communities and to American society
What were some of the gifts sent on the <i>Merci Train</i> ? What is the significance of these gifts and how do they exhibit good citizenship?	Civics. C-1D-E2 describing the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in a democratic society
In what ways was the <i>Merci Train</i> a work of art from France?	Art. AP-1C-E2 recognizing that the concept of beauty differs from culture to culture

K-4 Activities

Example	Strands and Benchmarks
Find France and the United States on a map or globe. What separates them? How far apart are they?	Geography. G-1A-E2 locating and interpreting geographic features and places on maps and globes
Assume that each boxcar in The Friendship Train could carry about 6.5 tons of supplies. If the United States sent 700 full boxcars, how many tons of supplies were sent?	Number and Number Relations. N-5-E selecting appropriate operation(s) (add, subtract, multiply, and divide) for a given situation

5-8 Discussion Questions

Example	Strands and Benchmarks
How did the <i>Merçi Train</i> become part of America's culture?	History. H-1A-M6 conducting research in efforts to answer historical questions
How has French culture influenced your experience as a Louisiana citizen?	History. H-1D-M1 describing the contributions of people, events, movements, and ideas that have been significant in the history of Louisiana
Describe the United States' relations with France at the end of WWII. How are they different today?	History. H-1AM1 describing chronological relationships and patterns
By looking at the <i>Merçi Train</i> exhibit, what objects strike you as particularly French? What objects from your life would you send to show your gratitude and represent American culture?	Art. AP-1C-M3 Identifying and exploring the meaning of art and the relationship of the role of artists to their culture and environment Art. AP-1C-M4 Demonstrating awareness of new ideas, possibilities, options, and situations pertaining to the art world.

5-8 Activities

Example	Strands and Benchmarks
Categorize the gifts that were sent to the U.S. from France. Make a line or bar graph displaying percentages of each category of gifts.	Number and Number Relations. N-1-M demonstrating that a rational number can be expressed in many forms, and selecting an appropriate form for a given situation (e.g., fractions, decimals, and percents)
In a letter to a friend, draw an object that you would send to a French student representing you, your family, or your community. Tell them how that object is particularly representative of one of the categories.	Art. Creative Expression. CE-1VA-H5 producing imaginative works of art generated from individual and group ideas.

9-12 Discussion Questions

Example	Strands and Benchmarks
How does the story of the <i>Merci Train</i> reflect politics and life during WWII in the United States and France?	History. H-1A-H2 explaining and analyzing events, ideas, and issues within a historical context
Describe the economy in the United States and France after WWII. Describe the economy today. How do they differ?	Economics. E-1A-H4 comparing and evaluating economic systems Economics. E-1A-H8 applying economic concepts to understand and evaluate historical and contemporary issues History. H-1B-H13 analyzing the origins, course, and results of WWII
What role did women play during WWII in the United States and France. What contributions did women make to the <i>Merci Train</i> ?	History. H-1A-H5 conducting research in efforts to analyze historical questions and issues
How did France's scarcity of supplies effect economics in the United States?	Economics. E-1B-H4 analyzing the causes and consequences of worldwide economic interdependence
Describe the French influences in your community today. How has history impacted or caused these influences?	History. H-1A-H5 analyzing cause-effect relationships History. H-1A-H4 utilizing knowledge of facts and concepts drawn from history and methods of historical inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary issues

9-12 Activities

Example	Strands and Benchmarks
Pretend you are a historian. Briefly interpret any six items from the <i>Merci Train</i> .	History. H-1A-H3 interpreting and evaluating the historical evidence presented in primary and secondary sources English Language Arts. ELA-7-H1 using comprehension strategies in contexts.
Look at France's location on a map. How did their location affect their participation in WWII?	Geography. G-1B-H1 determining how location and social, cultural, and economic processes affect the features and significance of places
At the time, the estimated value of boxcars sent to France was reported in newspapers. Use reference material to find this monetary value.	English Language Arts. ELA-5-E2 locating and evaluating information sources English Language Arts. ELA-5-H5 citing references using various formats

Comparing the United States of America and France

Which country is bigger in size? _____

The United States is in what hemisphere? _____

France is in what hemisphere? _____

How far apart are the United States and France? _____

Which country has more people? _____

What is the capital of the United States? _____

What is the capital of France? _____

Which country is older? _____

What is the name of our President? _____

How long has he been in office? _____



What is the name of France's President?

How long has he been in office?

countries?

Why do you think it is important to learn
about other

The Friendship Train of 1947 and the Merci Train of 1949

Things of the Past?

What was the significance of the Friendship Train in 1947 and the Merci Train in 1949?

Do you see examples of a friendly global community today? What are they?

Should the United States reach out to everyone who needs our help? If not, why not? If you believe it should, under what circumstances?

If the circumstances right now were the same as they were in 1949, do you believe the people of America would support a Friendship Train today? Why or why not?

Do you see places in the world right now that need your help?

Do you believe you can make a difference? How?

Do you believe it is important to learn about different countries and explore cultural differences? What can be gained from doing so?



“Design A Boxcar” Contest

As the grand finale, Louisiana’s Old State Capitol will orchestrate the delivery of the gifts to France. We would like to see these special gifts delivered in a student-designed boxcar.

Contest Guidelines:

1. Design a boxcar on attached 8 1/2” by 11” paper
2. Attach the registration form below to your design.

**“Design a Boxcar” Contest
Registration Form**

Student(s) name _____

Age _____ Grade _____

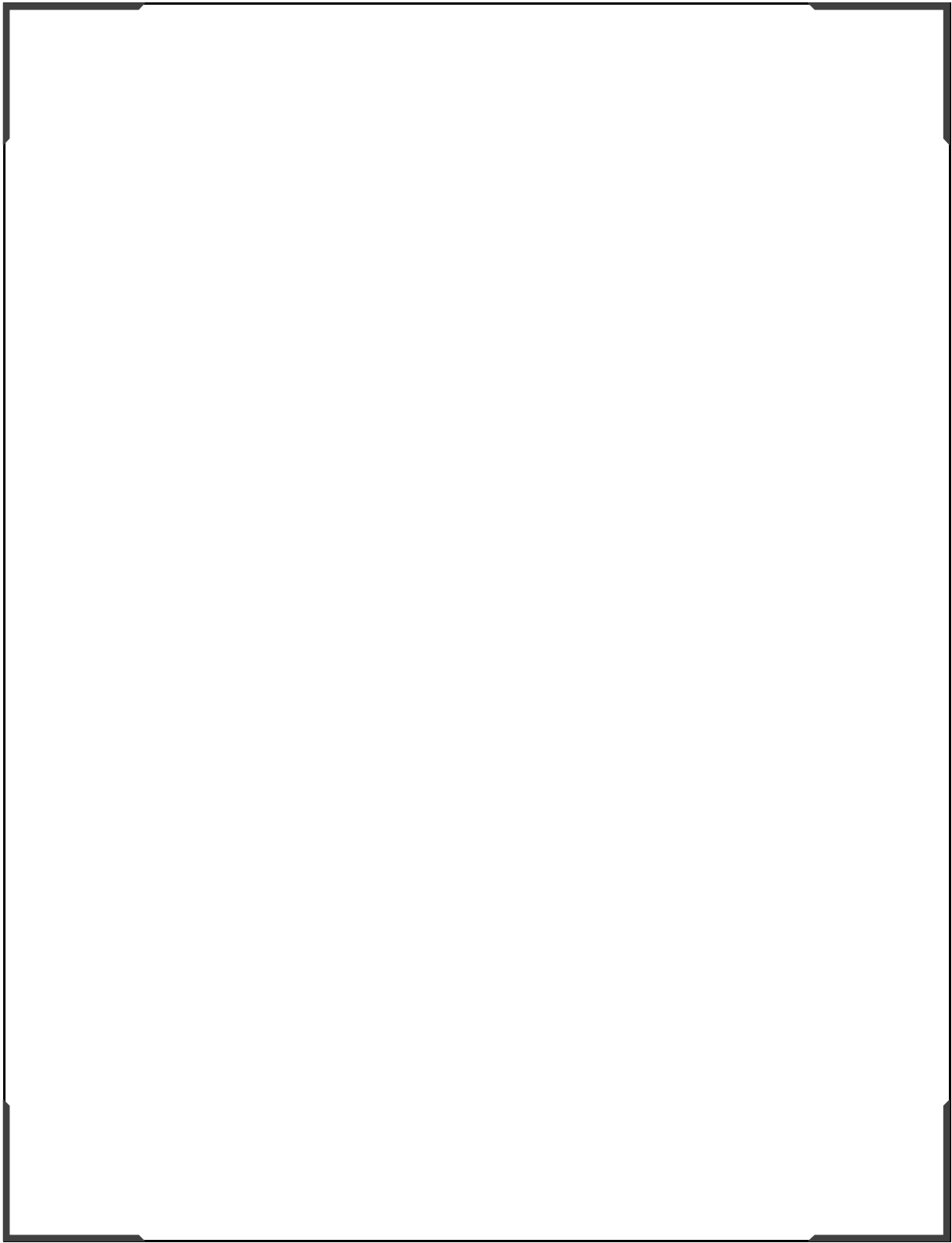
School _____

School phone number _____

School address _____



Design a Boxcar



Merci!

for participating in an educational program
of Louisiana's Old State Capitol

We look forward to seeing you in November for our Grand Finale and parade.

Be sure to come visit us and take a look at the Merci Train located on the front lawn of the Old State Capitol. To schedule your visit, please call (800)-488-2968 or (225) 342-0500.

And please look for upcoming events from the Education Department at the Old State Capitol, including the National Student/Parent Mock Election in Fall 2000!

